

# The Haslemere Town Council Members' Code of Conduct

## Introduction and Interpretation

1. (1) This Code applies to you as a Member of Haslemere Town Council ("the Council") when you act in your role as a Member.
- (2) You are a representative of the Council and the public will view you as such. Your actions can impact on how the Council as a whole is viewed.
- (3) This Code is based on and is consistent with the principles of public life set out in Section 28 Localism Act 2011 which the Council endorses: -
  - selflessness
  - integrity
  - objectivity
  - accountability
  - openness
  - honesty
  - leadership

The Council is under a duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by members

- (4) It is your responsibility to comply with the provisions of this Code when acting in your capacity as a Member.
- (5) In this Code –
  - "meeting" means any meeting of
    - (a) the Council;
    - (b) any of the Council's committees, sub-committees, joint committees, joint sub-committees, Special interest Groups;
  - "Member" includes a co-opted member and an appointed member.
- (6) If you are unsure about whether or not the code of conduct applies to a particular situation, you should consult the Town Clerk. –

## General Obligations

2. (1) **You must** always treat member colleagues, officers, other organizations and members of the public with respect.
- (2) **You must not** conduct yourself in a manner which is contrary to the Council's duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members.
- (3) **You must not** disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where –
  - (i) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;
  - (ii) you are required by law to do so;
  - (iii) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
  - (iv) the disclosure is –
    - (aa) reasonable and in the public interest;

- (bb) made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the Council; and
    - (cc) you have consulted the Monitoring Officer or taken other independent legal advice prior to its release.
  - (4) **You must not** prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.
  - (5) **You must not** use or attempt to use your position as a Member improperly to confer on or secure for yourself or any other person an advantage or disadvantage.
- 3. When using or authorising the use by others of the resources of the Council -
  - (1) **Do** act in accordance with the Council's reasonable requirements and policies;
  - (2) **Do** ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes); and
  - (3) **Do** have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

#### **Gifts and Hospitality**

- 4.
  - (1) **Do** exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a Member.
  - (2) **Do not** accept significant gifts or hospitality from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the Council or from persons who may apply to the Council for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.
  - (3) **Do** register with the Town Clerk any gift with an estimated value of at least £50 or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £100 within 28 days of its receipt.

#### **Registration of Interests**

- 5.
  - (1) You must notify the Monitoring Officer of your disclosable pecuniary interests, or other interests which the Council has decided are appropriate for registration. On election, you must do this within 28 days of being elected or appointed to office. Details of disclosable pecuniary interests are set out in the Annex to this Code. You should give sufficient detail of the interests for a member of the public to understand where there might be a conflict of interest.
  - (2) **Do** similarly notify the Monitoring Officer of any disclosable pecuniary or other interests not already registered within 28 days of your re-election or re-appointment to office. If these change you should update your Register of Interests entry promptly.
  - (3) **Do** be aware that disclosable pecuniary interests include not only your interests but also the interests of your spouse or civil partner, a person with whom you are living as husband or wife or a person with whom you are living as if they were a civil partner, so far as you are aware of the interests of that person.
  - (4) **Do** be aware that the Council has decided that it is appropriate for you to register and disclose non-pecuniary interests that arise from your membership of or your occupation of a position of general control or management in the following bodies -
    - (i) bodies to which you have been appointed or nominated by the Council;
    - (ii) bodies exercising functions of a public nature;
    - (iii) bodies directed to charitable purposes;

- (iv) bodies one of whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy.

### **Disclosure of Interests and Participation**

- 6. (1) **Do** disclose to a meeting at which you are present any disclosable pecuniary interest, or other interest which the Council has decided is appropriate for disclosure.
- (2) **Do** notify the Monitoring Officer of any interest not already registered that is disclosed to a meeting under paragraph 6(1) above within 28 days of the disclosure.
- (3) **Do not** participate in any discussion, or vote, where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter. **Do** withdraw from the meeting during the consideration of the matter.
- (3) Do declare any other non-pecuniary interest(s) that you consider to have sufficient weight so as to undermine your ability to make an open-minded and objective decision. Where this is the case, do exclude yourself from consideration of the item by withdrawing from the chamber for the duration of it being discussed.

In making a judgement about whether a non-pecuniary interest is of sufficient weight as to undermine your objectivity, you should consider what an ordinary member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would think.

### **Decision-making and Predetermination**

- 7. (1) Where you have been involved in campaigning in your political role on an issue which does not impact on your personal and/or professional life, you should not be prohibited from participating in a decision in your political role as a Member.
- (2) However, **do not** place yourself under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your official duties.
- (3) When making a decision, **do** consider the matter with an open mind and on the facts before the meeting at which the decision is to be made, listening to the advice of relevant parties, including advice from officers, and taking all relevant information into consideration, remaining objective and making decisions on merit.

## **ANNEXE – DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

### **1. Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation**

Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.

### **2. Sponsorship**

Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made or provided within the period of 12 months ending with the day on which you give a notification for the purposes of section 30(1) or section 31(7) of the Localism Act 2011 in respect of any expenses incurred in carrying out your duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

### **3. Contracts**

Any contract which is made between you (or a body in which you have a beneficial interest) and the Council-

- (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
- (b) which has not been fully discharged.

#### **4. Land**

Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the Council.

#### **5. Licences**

Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the Council for a month or longer.

#### **6. Corporate Tenancies**

Any tenancy where (to your knowledge)-

- (a) the landlord is the Council; and
- (b) the tenant is a body in which you have a beneficial interest.

#### **7. Securities**

Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where-

- (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the Council; and
- (b) either-
  - (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
  - (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

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